April 25, 2006
EPA's National Strategy for Agriculture

EPA is pleased to announce the development and release of EPA's National Strategy for Agriculture. This document underlines the Agency's commitment to a strong partnership with the agriculture community to assist in fulfilling our mission of protecting human health and the environment. Communication, collaboration and innovation are the basic tools emphasized in this strategy for constructing these essential partnerships. To read the full press release, please visit EPA's Newsroom. The full text of EPA's National Strategy for Agriculture is below.

Highlights

- EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson Interview in *Pork Magazine*
- EPA Deputy Administrator Marcus Peacock Interview on Renewable Energy
- Counselor to the EPA Administrator for Agricultural Policy Jon Scholl article on EMSs
- Sign up for Ag Center's News Service
- Take the Ag Center User Survey

EPA's National Strategy for Agriculture

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I. Introduction:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is committed to protecting the Nation's food, water, land and air for generations to come. These are goals that are important to American farmers, as well. This National Strategy for Agriculture sets forth a framework in which to accomplish these important goals by:

1) Increasing the awareness and understanding within EPA of agricultural impacts and benefits to human health and the environment and working across media in a more systems approach to environmental protection;

2) Working with the agricultural sector – including production, processing and distribution – in developing and demonstrating environmental protection solutions that express the value of farmland environmental stewardship activities to the public;

3) Coordinating research and technology development and transfer so the needs of agriculture and EPA can be more efficiently met; and,

4) Identifying existing environmental measures and developing new ones, where appropriate, to demonstrate environmental improvement related to agriculture.

EPA's interaction with the agricultural sector will occur within the current programs and organizational structure of the Agency. Because agricultural operations tend to be multi-unit operations functioning as a system, their problems and solutions are often multi-media in nature. Our challenge will be to use existing authorities while crossing programmatic and organizational boundaries to help the industry address environmental protection concerns.

A sampling of performance measures from the Agency's Strategic Plan have been attached at the end of this document to demonstrate the role that agriculture can play in protecting the environment.

Through this National Strategy for Agriculture, EPA will work in cooperation and collaboration with many stakeholders to encourage environmental protection solutions in agriculture.

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II. Vision

An environment where the agricultural sector is a source of environmental solutions and benefits contributing to and recognized for improvement of the Nation's environmental quality; where the Nation's agriculture is sustainable, economically viable and global in nature; and, where non-traditional, innovative and voluntary approaches are given equal opportunities for success with traditional regulatory approaches.

III. Implementation of Goals

A: The EPA Administrator, Assistant Administrators, and Regional Administrators will identify the impact of EPA's rules, policies, guidance, grants and other activities on agriculture as part of routine practice and, where appropriate, will coordinate these activities with USDA and/or other relevant parties. In the context of these rules and policies, senior EPA managers will work together across media and will identify the roles and contributions by agriculture for solutions to achieve greater environmental protection. The following objectives will be implemented to achieve this goal:

a. Create a greater understanding of the Federal infrastructure for dealing with agriculture including production, marketing, economics, management, trade and other international agreements.
b. Foster a holistic multi-media approach to environmental protection and public health relative to agriculture.
c. Emphasize innovative and cost effective approaches to environmental protection.
d. Use traditional approaches to environmental protection relative to agriculture where they are working effectively or where innovative, collaborative programs don't prove successful.

B. Work toward and demonstrate environmental protection with the agricultural sector through collaboration, innovative and voluntary programs, financial incentives, and traditional regulatory approaches. The following objectives will be implemented to achieve this goal:

a. Develop a greater understanding of EPA's mission and programs and their impact upon production agriculture.
b. Consider market strategies for conservation to bring about larger scale environmental protection and resource enhancement.
c. Increase education, incentives and funding opportunities for agricultural compliance with environmental protection goals.
d. Consider input from the agricultural sector in EPA rulemaking and strategic plans, in addition to other stakeholders already routinely involved.
e. Enhance awareness in the agricultural community about agriculture's impact on the environment, EPA's program and regulatory activities, and opportunities to interact with the Agency on issues of mutual concern.
f. Continue development and maintenance of mechanisms and for a for improved communication with the agricultural community on all relevant agency actions at the national, state and local levels.
g. Strive for greater use of collaborative efforts among state, local and other federal agencies for identifying and addressing agricultural and environmental

priorities.
h. Provide results, in collaboration with the research community, to the agriculture sector through outreach and web site publications.
i. Embrace demonstrated innovative approaches to compliance (i.e., performance based programs) and demonstrate the effectiveness of these approaches, assisting with technology transfer as appropriate.
j. Support research and development for technologies that will assist with environmental protection.

C. Develop an effective communication strategy and marketing network to better communicate with agriculture, assist with technology transfer and show environmental results. The following objectives will be implemented to achieve this goal:

a. Increase communication on issues related to agriculture and the environment.
b. Centralize and disseminate results from EPA funded projects and agreements so that research and technology development results are readily available to the public.
c. Communicate proactively with the agricultural industry on emerging issues.

D. Identify existing environmental measures (see Attachment A for examples) and, where needed, modify them or develop new ones to demonstrate environmental improvements that can be achieved through new practices or technologies. The following objectives will be implemented to achieve this goal:

a. Identify and assess environmental improvements related to agriculture and, where appropriate, use performance measures similar to or in harmony with those used by USDA.
b. Develop or improve environmental outcome measures which better capture all work related to agriculture or better reflect the environmental improvement the Agency needs to demonstrate. Such measures should include partnerships and collaborations such as cross media performance measures and measures which address the goal of coordinating research and technology development and transfer.
c. Incorporate national and regional agricultural priorities into EPA's strategic planning processes while maintaining opportunities for local and flexible solutions for local challenges.

More information from the Ag Center
Pollution Prevention, Best Management Practices, and Conservation
Environmental Management Systems (EMS)

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National Strategy for Agriculture

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Attachment A – Sample Performance Measures

Goals listed in the Agency Strategic Plan include contributions from all industrial sectors of which agriculture is one. Below are some examples of goals from the strategic plan whose accomplishment agriculture has the potential to contribute to and performance measures by which to measure them. Development of additional goals may be necessary to fully address contributions from agriculture to environmental protection.

Each of these performance measures has a component for which agriculture can contribute to attaining the goals. This can happen through a variety of EPA, USDA and other programs. Notable examples include the use of 319 funds to decrease nutrient loading on the Chesapeake Bay and Gulf of Mexico, development and implementation of nutrient management plans under the CAFO Rule, and the retrofit and electrification of diesel engines as part of the Agency's National Clean Diesel campaign.

Water Quality/Quantity Activities:

Performance measure: EPA will make water safer for swimming by implementing a three-part strategy to protect the quality of the Nation's recreational waters. *P.40. Objective 2.1: Protect Human Health. Sub-Objective 2.1.3: Water Safe for Swimming.*

Performance measure: By 2008, reduce levels of phosphorus contamination in rivers and streams so that phosphorus levels are below levels of concern established by USGS or levels adopted by a state or authorized tribe in a water quality standard in 30 percent of test sites for farmland streams (1992-98 Baseline: 25%). *P.41. Objective 2.2: Protect water quality. Sob-Objective 2.2.1; Improve Water Quality on a Watershed Basis.*

Performance measure: By 2008, working with partners, achieve a net increase of 400,000 acres of wetlands with additional focus on biological and functional measures. *P.94. Objective 4.3: Ecosystems. Sub-Objective 4.3.2: Increase Wetlands*

Performance measure: By 2008, reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment loads entering the Chesapeake Bay from 1985 levels. *P.95 Objective 4.3: Ecosystems. Sub-Objective 4.3.4: Improve the Aquatic Health of the Chesapeake Bay*

Performance measure: By 2015, reduce releases of nutrients throughout the Mississippi River Basin to reduce the size of the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico to less than 5,000 km^2, as measured by the 5-year running average of the size of the zone. *P.95. Objective 4.3: Ecosystems. Sub-Objective 4.3.5: Improve the Aquatic Health of the Gulf of Mexico*

Air Quality Activities:

Performance Measure: By 2010, reduce mobile source emissions of nitrogen oxides by 3.4 million tones from the 2000 level of 11.8 million tons; volatile organic compounds by 1.7 million tons from the 000 level of .7 million tons; and fine particles by 122,400 tons from the 2000 level of 510,550 tons. *P.13. objective 1.1: Healthier Outdoor Air. Sub-objective 1.1.1: More People Breathing Cleaner Air.*

Performance Measure: By 2010, working with partners, reduce air toxics emissions and implement area-specific approaches to reduce the risk to public health and the environment from toxic air pollutants. *P.13. objective 1.1: Healthier Outdoor Air. Sub-Objective 1.1.2: Reduced risk from Toxic Air Pollutants.*

Performance Measure: Outside the regulatory arena, work to reduce smog and greenhouse gas emissions by developing new cleaner technologies and promoting the use of those developed by others. *P.142. Cross Goal Strategies. Innovative Approaches for Achieving National Goals*

Prevent/Reduce Pesticide Risks

Reduce exposure to toxic pesticides.

Performance Measure: Through 2008, systematically review pesticides in the marketplace to ensure that they meet the most current safety standards: reregistration, tolerance reassessment and registration reviews. *P. 80. Objective 4.1: Chemical, Organism, and Pesticide Risks. Sub-Objective 4.1.1: Reduce Exposure to Toxic Pesticides*

Performance Measure: Each year through 2008, protect endangered and threatened species by ensuring that none of the 15 species on the EPA/USDA/FWS priority list of threatened or endangered species will be jeopardized by exposure to pesticides. *P. 80. Objective 4.1: Chemical, Organism, and Pesticide Risks. Sub-Objective 4.1.1: Reduce Exposure to Toxic Pesticides*

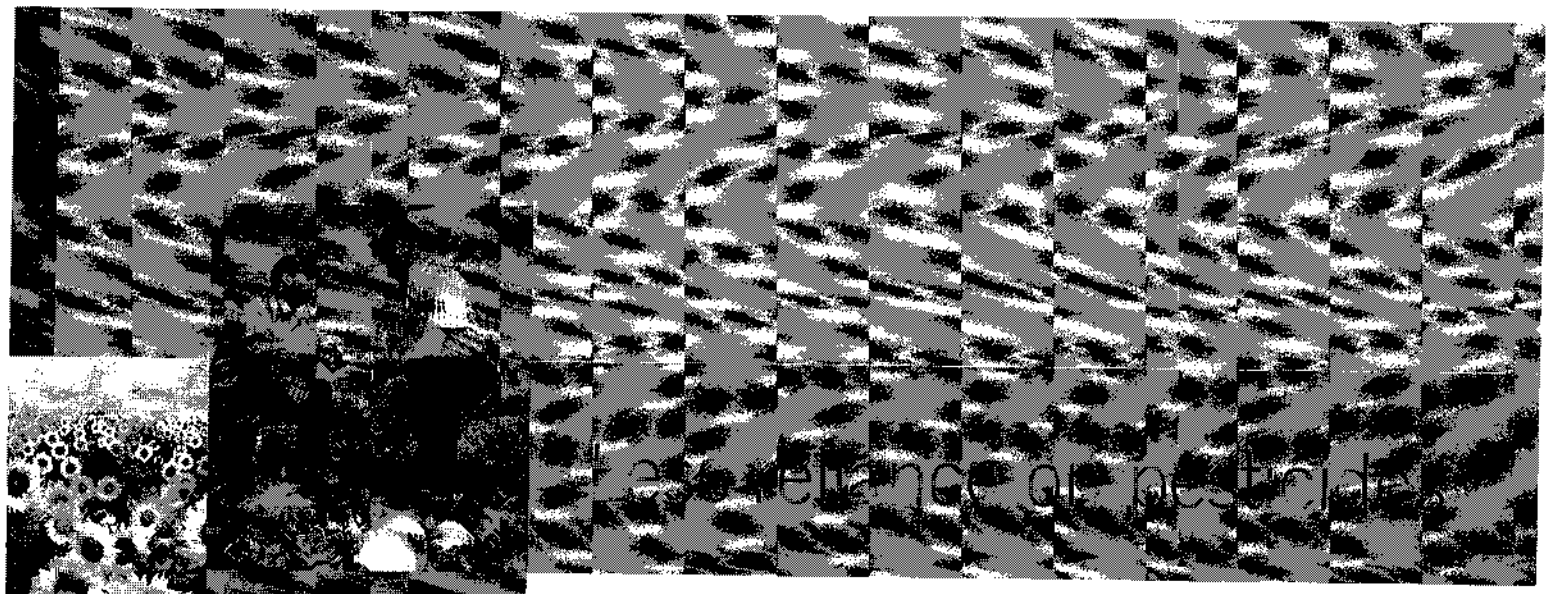
Performance Measure: By 2008, decrease by 30 percent the occurrence of residues of carcinogenic and cholinesterase-inhibiting neurotoxic pesticides on foods eaten by children from their average 1994-1996 levels. *P. 80. Objective 4.1: Chemical, Organism, and Pesticide Risks. Sub-Objective 4.1.1: Reduce Exposure to Toxic Pesticides*

License pesticides meeting the latest safety standards.

Performance Measure: By 2008, at least 11 percent of acre treatments will use applications of reduced-risk pesticides. *P. 81. Objective 4.1: Chemical, Organism, and Pesticide Risks. Sub-Objective 4.1.2 License Pesticides Meeting Safety Standards*

Performance Measure: Each year through 2008, expedite the registration of 4–6 new active ingredients that meet the criteria for reduced-risk pesticides or organophosphate alternatives to make safer pest management tools available sooner. *P. 81. Objective 4.1: Chemical, Organism, and Pesticide Risks. Sub-Objective 4.1.2 License Pesticides Meeting Safety Standards*

Performance Measure: Each year through 2008, maintain the timeliness of Section 18 emergency exemption decisions. *P. 81. Objective 4.1: Chemical, Organism, and Pesticide Risks. Sub-Objective 4.1.2 License Pesticides Meeting Safety Standards*



We support least-toxic pest management on the farm, and in schools and neighborhoods.

Celebrating 11 years of Innovators

Since 1994, DPR has given out more than 80 IPM Innovator Awards to honor private and public organizations that emphasize pest prevention, favor least-hazardous pest control, and share their successful strategies with others. (IPM – integrated pest management – works with nature to encourage beneficial plants and animals while making it difficult for pests to survive.)

For many recipients the award comes as a long-overdue acknowledgement of work conducted with little financial reward and against many technical and logistical obstacles. It serves as notice that it pays to do the right thing, for the right reasons. As Ganna Walska Lotusland Foundation, a Santa Barbara botanical garden that won a 2001 award, said, "DPR's recognition of our determination to pursue new systems of pest control and our efforts to share our experience with others is truly gratifying."

The Sonoma County Grape Growers Association, recipient of a 2000 IPM Innovator award, appreciated how the award validated what the group had accomplished in providing growers with information and educational opportunities to promote sustainable grape production. The association added that "grower support had been tremendous." In turn, Bob Hopkins, a Russian River Valley grape grower, praised the association's work, saying that "one real accomplishment was getting growers together talking about pesticide reduction...letting people know it is doable and desirable."

At the 2004 awards ceremony, representatives of IPM Innovator Fetzer Vineyards of Mendocino County summed up the company's philosophy: "We don't do it because it's trendy or to make a political statement. We do it because we believe that it results in better-tasting wines and that it's simply the right thing to do."

Building on Alliances and Grants

Since 1995, DPR's Pest Management Grants and Alliances have helped build grassroots support of IPM, encouraging an array of experimentation and demonstration projects with one goal: identify workable, least-hazardous pest management solutions.

We have good news and bad. From 1995 to 2002, DPR awarded about $8 million for 154 grants and 44 alliances in 38 counties, with emphasis on protecting surface and ground water, finding alternatives to high-toxicity pesticides, and reducing worker exposure. In agriculture, DPR-funded projects have demonstrated IPM practices in almonds, wine grapes, walnuts, prunes, peaches, plums, citrus, and other commodities – crops that are now planted on hundreds of thousands of acres in Cali-

fornia. In the urban environment, DPR projects have helped schools, museums, and communities demonstrate model IPM programs. On the downside, the State budget crisis forced a suspension of Grant and Alliance funding in 2002. However, we will be looking at creative solutions to build on these successes in light of budget realities.

There are many success stories. A notable one – because it led directly to greater IPM adoption on a commodity-wide basis – is the Almond Pest Management Alliance, formed in 1998 with pesticide use reduction as a priority. The consortium of growers, researchers, and pest control advisors received funds from DPR for five years. The money established an industry program that continues to find pest management solutions that reduce use of problematic pesticides. Almond growers used 14.5 million pounds of pesticide in 1997 – the year before the Alliance – but 10.1 million pounds in 2002. The decline coincided with a rise in planted acres and production.

Almond growers point to diazinon as an example of the effort. Their use of the insecticide fell from 115,000 pounds in 1997 to 63,000 pounds in 2001, a 45 percent drop. Diazinon is often sprayed in the dormant season, where winter rain can cause runoff into rivers, lakes, and streams. Growers now use orchard sanitation to remove certain over-wintering pests, applications of dormant oil alone with no insecticide, or in-season applications of reduced-risk insecticides. Pheromone monitoring traps are used to track pest and beneficial insect levels. This monitoring information is used for making in-season pest management decisions. Growers also plant cover crops to attract beneficial insects and improve water infiltration in the orchard.

In 2003, U.S. EPA awarded a $40,000 grant to DPR to continue its assistance to the almond growers. One especially noteworthy product was the *Seasonal Guide to Environmentally Responsible Pest Management Practices in Almonds*. Published in October 2004, it is a colorful, easy-to-follow "cookbook" guide to a reduced-risk system of almond production.

Encouraging school IPM

Working with school districts to make IPM the preferred way to manage pests is paying off. More school district personnel are being trained in IPM and schools are finding that the least-toxic approach works well.

They are being helped by the revised School IPM Guidebook DPR published in 2003. In 2004, we developed and distributed pest-specific school IPM fact sheets on ants and cockroaches. (In development are handouts on yellowjackets, gophers and weeds.)

All our published school IPM information – and there is a lot if it – is posted on our dedicated Web site (www.schoolipm.info). For example, we feature new curricula on yellowjackets, burrowing rodents, landscape weeds and turf weeds we developed for the IPM training sessions we hold regularly for district staff.

In 2003 and 2004, DPR staff conducted nine regional training workshops, attended by 288 staff from 226 school districts. (There are 998 districts in California, about a third of which have requested training.) We plan to conduct four more workshops in 2005.

We will also be working with UC's Statewide IPM Program on an interactive training module for school IPM. It will supplement the workshops by providing school IPM coordinators with an additional tool to use for their localized district training efforts.

In late 2004, our school IPM program started quarterly updates to district IPM coordinators, and a biannual newsletter starts in spring of 2005. In summer of 2005, we will publish our survey of school IPM practices, comparing the results to two previous surveys.

Department of Pesticide Regulation

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January 24, 2006 (06-01)
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPR releases 2004 pesticide use data; more nature-friendly chemicals gain favor

(Editors/reporters: See county statistics and rankings online [PDF, 12 kb] and the 2004 Pesticide Use Report Summary and selected "top" data lists.)

SACRAMENTO -- The California Department of Pesticide Regulation today reported a small increase in pounds of pesticides applied in 2004, but that included a dramatic rise in the use of some nature-friendly chemicals.

Commercial pesticide use increased from 175 million pounds in 2003 to 180 million pounds in 2004, an increase of less than 3 percent.

More than half of the five million pound increase in 2004 could be linked to two chemicals that qualify for organic agriculture -- sulfur and mineral oils. In addition, "A dramatic increase occurred in the use of some newer, reduced-risk pesticides," said DPR analysts. Meanwhile, use declined for several classes of highly toxic chemicals, both in pounds applied and acres treated.

DPR Director Mary Ann Warmerdam said the statistics were timely. "They coincide with DPR policy initiatives to emphasize more sustainable, less toxic pest management for agriculture and industry, and in homes and gardens," said Warmerdam. "This is just another indication that we are moving in the right direction."

Last year, Warmerdam directed DPR's Pest Management Advisory Committee to begin developing a statewide blueprint for integrated pest management (IPM), a least-toxic approach that stresses more prevention and less reliance on chemicals. A diverse workgroup made recommendations to the committee late last year. DPR expects to move forward on its IPM blueprint after the pest management committee meets in March, said Warmerdam.

"The recommendations include more IPM research, as well as public-private cooperative efforts that offer strong and positive incentives to industry," said Warmerdam. She also welcomed a recommendation for renewed support of IPM grant programs. DPR produced dozens of successful IPM projects around the state, until budget cuts suspended the IPM grants in 2003.

Some details from the 2004 DPR pesticide use summary:

Pesticide use varies from year to year based on many factors, including types of crops, economics, acreage planted, and other factors – most notably weather. A wet winter in 2004 promoted weed growth; then a hot, dry summer encouraged mites and other pests. In addition, acreage increased for some major crops, and high-value crops often justify more intensive pest management.

As measured by pounds, sulfur was the most-used chemical with 54 million pounds, or about 30 percent of all pounds applied. Sulfur -- favored by both conventional and organic farmers -- saw use increase by nearly 800,000 pounds (1.5 percent) in 2004. Use of mineral oil, another chemical that qualifies for organic production, increased by 2.8 million pounds (44 percent).

Meanwhile, "A dramatic increase occurred in the use of some newer, reduced-risk pesticides such as spinosad, acetamiprid, pyraclostrobin, methoxyfenozide, carfentrazone-ethyl, and boscalid," DPR analysts reported.

Spinosad is a relatively new chemical class of insecticides derived from a natural soil bacterium. It was first discovered by a vacationing scientist in an abandoned rum distillery in the Caribbean. Spinosad use increased by 4,400 pounds and 52,000 acres -- to a total of more than 858,000 cumulative acres -- in 2004.

Use of insecticide organophosphate and carbamate chemicals – compounds of high regulatory concern – continued to decline. Use declined by 130,000 pounds (1.6 percent) and by 360,000 acres treated (5.7 percent) in 2004.

Use of chemicals classified as reproductive toxins declined by 600,000 pounds (2.5 percent), and by cumulative acres treated, 180,000 acres (7.7 percent). The fumigant methyl bromide showed the largest decline in pounds -- 295,000 -- or 4 percent.

Another major fumigant, metam-sodium, decreased by 132,000 pounds (1 percent) and about 14,000 cumulative acres (10 percent). Use of the fumigant 1,3-D increased by 1.9 million pounds (28 percent) and about 7,700 acres (16 percent).

As in previous years, the most pesticide use occurred in the San Joaquin Valley, the nation's No. 1 agricultural area. Fresno, Kern, Tulare, and San Joaquin counties had the highest poundage use.

Pesticide use is reported as the number of pounds of active ingredient and the total number of acres treated. Data for pounds includes both agricultural and nonagricultural applications; data for acres treated are primarily agricultural applications. The number of acres treated is cumulative; one acre treated three

times is counted as three acres.

One of six departments and boards within Cal/EPA, DPR regulates the use of pesticides to protect human health and the environment.

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Department of Pesticide Regulation

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Media Contact: Glenn Brank
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October 11, 2005 (05-16)
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IPM Innovator knows sweet smell of success;
9 receive DPR annual environmental award

(Editors: Winners are based in Butte, Kern, Napa, Sacramento, San Luis Obispo, Santa Clara, and Sutter counties.)

SACRAMENTO -- Sometimes, the most natural way to detect pests can be found right under your nose.

At least that's true for Agricultural Advisors of Live Oak in Sutter County, one of the nine winners of the Department of Pesticide Regulation's annual IPM Innovator Awards. "My father can actually smell mites while driving by an orchard at 60 mph," says John Post. "I can't do that, but I can sure smell them in the field," he said of the tiny, but voracious, pests.

IPM -- integrated pest management -- works with nature to create a healthy ecosystem that controls pests while reducing or eliminating the need for pesticides. Since 1994, DPR has supported IPM by recognizing California's most innovative pest managers.

"This year's winners exemplify the kind of sustainable environmental practices and imaginative thinking that we want to encourage for pest management in the 21st century," said DPR Director Mary-Ann Warmerdam.

For Agricultural Advisors, the nose knows how to sniff out mites -- arachnid (eight-legged) wingless pests

that can decimate the leaves of peach, pear, and walnut trees and ruin crops. Mites are so small that they are nearly invisible to the naked eye -- but not to a well-trained nose.

"To me, it smells like green apples," said Post. "It may not be the mites themselves, but the smell of the leaf cells breaking up from the mites attacking them."

Early mite detection is critical to effective pest management, Post explained. Sometimes, it may even prevent unnecessary treatments. "If I find mites on the leaves, but don't smell them, then I know that no damage is being done, so I leave 'em alone."

Some mite species are beneficial. Others may cause minimal damage, but provide a food source for good predator insects -- lacewing, thrip or ladybugs -- encouraged by Agricultural Advisors' IPM strategy.

Other 2005 IPM Innovators include a county government and three wine grape winners:

- California Rice Commission, Sacramento, which has worked to reduce rice herbicide use, while providing wildlife habitat and cooperating with mosquito abatement programs.
- Hudson Vineyards, Napa, a grower for more than two dozen high-end wineries that has trained its workforce to use IPM in every phase of its operations.
- Integrated Prune Farming Practices, a Butte County program that introduced an IPM guide that helped growers statewide reduce pesticide use, in partnership with University of California (UC) Cooperative Extension.
- Mesa Vineyard Management, Templeton (San Luis Obispo County), which uses a combination of high-tech gear -- such as spray gear that recognizes weeds -- and classic, sustainable farming.
- Napa Valley Grapegrowers, Napa, a nonprofit group that promotes the preservation of agriculture through good community relations and progressive farming practices.
- Santa Clara County, which passed an IPM ordinance in 2002 and uses reduced-risk pest management in county-owned parks, landscaping, ponds and other sites, while fostering greater IPM awareness with regional conferences and demonstrations.
- The Nature Conservancy, Chico, manages 4,000 acres of Sacramento River property from Red Bluff to Colusa, restoring some unproductive farmland to a natural state, while introducing IPM practices to actively farmed properties.
- Vetsch Farms, Bakersfield, uses advanced environmental practices to produce high-quality almonds marketed in Europe and the United States.

As one of six departments and boards within the California Environmental Protection Agency, DPR regulates the sale and use of pesticides to protect people and the environment.

Following are profiles of the 2005 IPM Innovators and press contact information:

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORS, LIVE OAK

Agricultural Advisors, a recognized pest management leader in Sacramento Valley orchards, also does national and international work. One of California's first independent crop consultants, Agricultural Advisors was founded in 1968 by George Post, a University of California Extension farm advisor, and fertilizer dealer Robert Hanke. The firm is now headed by George Post's son, John, and agronomist Kent Brocker. Associates include Rick Carothers (agronomy), Russell Maichel (agricultural business), Mike Marshall (fruit science) and research director Tim Ksander (entomology).

Agricultural Advisors has helped its clients reduce pesticide use on up to 50,000 acres across the Valley, and some industry specialists say the firm's success stories has influenced farming practices on another 100,000 acres.

Some of the IPM techniques popularized by Agricultural Advisors include weekly visits to grower orchards to monitor for pest and beneficial insect levels before making treatment decisions. Scouting techniques include using a keen sense of smell to determine the presence and feeding activity of web-spinning mite pests. The firm recommends treating every other tree row, when appropriate, to decrease chemical use and protect beneficial insects; early adoption and promotion of pheromone (scent) technology to disrupt pest reproduction as an alternative to highly toxic chemicals; and using contract research information to evaluate new chemistries for a reduced-risk control program.

Agricultural Advisors' research department conducts contract and in-house research at three field stations and in client orchards. About 100 trials are conducted each year, including studies about the environmental impacts of old and new chemistries. Agricultural Advisors recently began surveying the dormant season spray practices of 17 large growers to evaluate changes and better inform the regulatory process.

Agricultural Advisors shares non-confidential information about its use of IPM technology with clients (via brochures and a newsletter) and with other crop protection professionals. Members of the firm are guest lectures at agricultural events and they participate in field days sponsored by major grower organizations and universities.

Agricultural Advisors is widely recognized for cutting-edge advisory services, original IPM research and extensive collaborative research and development projects, as well as energetic outreach activities. All of these achievements make Agricultural Advisors a natural choice for an IPM Innovator award.

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CALIFORNIA RICE COMMISSION, SACRAMENTO

The California Rice Commission, formed under the California Food and Agricultural Code, represents all of the state's rice growers and handlers. In addition to management of rice production, milling, and marketing, the commission is mandated to "carry out the California rice industry's commitment to responsible

stewardship and increasingly efficient cultural practices". The commission has undertaken an impressive range of reduced-risk practices and IPM activities.

Since 2003, the commission has administered the Rice Pesticides Program to minimize potential off-site movement of pesticides into waterways. The commission supports ongoing research on weed resistance and other key issues affecting weed control. For example, the commission has supported post-harvest tillage to encourage decomposition of rice straw and prevent weed and algae problems in the next growing season. Minimizing insecticide use is also very important as the industry moves from highly toxic organophosphate chemicals to pyrethrins.

Working closely with vector control districts, the commission developed a brochure to help rice growers improve their mosquito control. IPM practices have reduced insecticide use from 40 percent to 25 percent (or less) of total rice acreage by encouraging natural mosquito predators. The commission is also working with vector control districts to propose a delay in winter flooding, yet meet the habitat needs of migrating waterfowl. Millions of acres of waterfowl habitat have been developed with the commission's assistance.

In addition to meetings and workshops on conservation, the commission hosts an annual U.S. EPA Rice Tour and 16 other tours. The industry supports a Rice Field Day that showcases field trials and rice variety research. Yearly publications include six grower letters, five newsletters, and an annual report. Additional outreach activities are publicized on the commission's Web site www.calrice.org [opens in a new window]. The commission also has supported an environmental and conservation audit of the California rice industry to critique performance related to the environment, natural resource demands, and conservation stewardship.

The California Rice Commission qualifies as an IPM Innovator for its energetic leadership role for the industry at both the state and national levels. DPR recognizes the commission for its achievements in conservation; for collaboration with environmental and regulatory organizations on air and water quality issues; for assistance with mosquito abatement, and for an extensive education and outreach program.

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HUDSON VINEYARDS, NAPA

Lee Hudson and his family began planting wine grapes in Napa County in 1981. Today, they grow 180 acres to supply about 28 high-end wineries.

Hudson Vineyards uses weather-monitoring technologies to minimize chemical applications in any field situation. The vineyards welcome beneficial organisms to combat vineyard pests: Owl boxes, raptor roosts, and cover crops for beneficial insects are provided. The operation also uses a very carefully planned program of cultural practices to reduce or eliminate chemical control for weeds, as well as fungal and insect pests. Overall, Hudson Vineyards manages its crops with an IPM systems approach that is comprehensive in scope and impressive in attention to detail.

The vineyard workforce -- from crews to tractor drivers to foremen -- are trained to make decisions based on scientific principles of IPM. Hudson operates on the premise that if workers understand why they are doing

something, they can do a better job to achieve the highest quality with fewer chemicals and least risk. This educational emphasis extends to winery clients and the community. Hudson Vineyards takes part in outreach programs with Napa Sustainable Winegrowing Group, Napa Resource Conservation District, and the Sierra Club, among other organizations. The operation also has supported a wide range of research projects including graduate student projects from Stanford, UC Berkeley, and UC Davis. Research projects have also included international groups in Chile and South Africa, the American Vineyard Foundation, and others.

udson Vineyards demonstrates the prime characteristics that DPR seeks in an IPM Innovator -- a history of community involvement and leadership, as well as sustainable agricultural practices in a system that reduces pesticide risks to people, air, and water. The business supports education and research, and shares knowledge and experience with the community to demonstrate the effectiveness and economic success of IPM. For these and other reasons, Hudson Vineyards is a most worthy IPM Innovator.

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INTEGRATED PRUNE FARMING PRACTICES, OROVILLE

The Integrated Prune Farming Practices program, organized in 1998, is administered by the California Dried Plum Board and supervised by the California Dried Plum Board Research Subcommittee. The program is a partnership involving the board, UC Cooperative Extension, DPR, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, The Nature Conservancy, and pest control advisors and growers.

Integrated Prune Farming Practices promotes new and innovative reduced-risk pest monitoring techniques for dried plum production. Alternative practices include replacing dormant season applications of organophosphate insecticides with oil; monitoring pest population levels to better time applications of "soft" insecticides, precise irrigation monitoring to manage run-off, and use of cover crops to increase beneficial insects. The program has produced 12 new pest management protocols and demonstrated their effectiveness with a core group of 33 growers and 15 participating pest control advisors. The goals are to significantly reduce organophosphate use by all prune growers; use monitoring techniques and treatment thresholds for insect pests and diseases; demonstrate how cover crops can reduce pesticide run-off, and improve irrigation management to protect surface and ground water.

The program has shown that most dried plum orchards do not need annual dormant season pesticide treatments for scale or peach twig borer control; that most dried plum orchards can control prune aphids with very low rates of insecticides, and that prune rust treatments are not needed as often as previously believed. The program recognizes the importance of fertility and irrigation management as critical components of a good IPM program.

Through 2003, Integrated Prune Farming Practicesconducted more than 113 educational meetings reaching more than 3,800 interested parties. Some 13 newsletters on the program's progress were published and distributed to more than 1,100 growers and about 500 related industry members in California. Advisors also wrote newsletters to their county clientele. In 2003, the "Integrated Prune Farming Practices Decision Guide" was first published and distributed at day-long workshop s on reduced-risk farming practices for dried plum production. "Decision Guide" concepts were demonstrated for more than 200 interested growers

and pest advisors at six meetings across the state. In 2004, 14 meetings were held. One-on-one consultations are a continual part of the program.

For its remarkable vision, leadership and perseverance in publishing the "Decision Guide," and in recognition of extensive efforts to reduce pesticide risks and support sustainable practices, the Integrated Prune Farming Practices deserves recognition as an IPM Innovator.

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MESA VINEYARD MANAGEMENT, TEMPLETON (San Luis Obispo County)

Mesa Vineyard Management oversees vineyards in Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties. Clients range from small vineyards with 20 acres to corporate clients, including wineries. Owner Dana Merrill's own Pomar Junction Vineyard in San Luis Obispo County has launched several projects for Biologically Integrated Farming Systems, a University of California grants program to help growers enhance environmental quality while maintaining crop yields and profits. The firm also maintains a model employee benefits program that underscores a commitment to social equity.

Mesa Vineyard Management emphasizes low-risk pest management with little or no reliance on organophosphates in conjunction with use of "smart technology" equipment that recognizes and sprays only weeds. Mesa also uses cover cropping on hillsides -- with no tillage for up to ten years -- to reduce herbicide use and create habitat for beneficial insects. Weeds between rows are removed mechanically, without use of herbicides. All field employees are trained as scouts. They monitor and record insect pests, diseases, and weed pressure regularly and extensively. Weather station models are used to time fungicide sprays, as opposed to spraying by calendar. Mesa Vineyard Management also releases beneficial insects to provide biological pest control.

The company has hosted numerous "tailgate sessions" for other growers and pest advisors, and Mesa staffers became charter members of the Central Coast Vineyard Team upon its formation nearly ten years ago. Mesa Vineyard also encourages clients to provide IPM demonstration sites and host projects. The company includes these projects in its budgets and shows clients how the projects benefited them. Company employees discuss practical application of sustainable practices with a variety of audiences, from legislators to large industry groups. They also work with UC Cooperative Extension on various research projects and have engaged local groups on farm worker safety issues.

Mesa Vineyard Management's reduced-risk pest management practices have shown outstanding results in the field. The firm has reduced pesticide use and risk within its own projects, and documented that its methods produce less pesticide use and risk than comparable vineyards. For its innovative farming practices and willingness to share useful information with others in the vineyard industry, Mesa Vineyard Management has earned recognition as an IPM Innovator.

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NAPA VALLEY GRAPEGROWERS, NAPA

Napa Valley Grapegrowers was founded in 1975 to promote the interests of local, independent vineyard owners. The non-profit organization, which includes a board of directors, advisory board and full-time staff, supports sustainable agriculture and provides information and education for its members and the community.

Napa Valley Grapegrowers has become a leader in teaching growers about new methods, responsible practices, and IPM approaches. For example, emphasis is placed on a systems approach to pest management, including biodynamic and organic methods that stress sustainability and biodiversity. Growers are encouraged to use a range of IPM practices, such as monitoring for pests and beneficial organisms; beneficial insect releases; cultural practices for insect, mite, and weed control; and use of reduced-risk pesticides for disease control. Napa Valley Grapegrowers has helped growers become familiar with the "Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices Workbook", which contains a comprehensive set of IPM practices. The group also emphasizes the preservation of agriculture through good community relations.

Napa Valley Grapegrowers has sponsored many IPM-related educational, training and outreach activities. These include seminars, workshops, and fairs for both grape growers and the public. They also sponsor the annual Organic Winegrowing Short Course -- an extensive education and training forum that emphasizes sustainable agricultural practices. The group produces a quarterly newsletter and maintains an informative Web site, www.napagrowers.org. Among its research activities, the group sponsored the 2003 and 2005 Napa Organic Cabernet Cost Studies with UC Davis. The study establishes production cost estimates and is available on Napa Valley Grapegrowers' Web site.

DPR considers Napa Valley Grapegrowers to be a model for promotion of IPM. The group has been highly successful at organizing growers and other organizations, improving cooperation, and sharing information. Notable efforts include helping growers combat two major vineyard pests, the glassy winged sharpshooter and vine mealybug. Napa Valley Grapegrowers deserves recognition for its continuing efforts on behalf of sustainable agriculture and IPM.

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SANTA CLARA COUNTY, SAN JOSE

As the largest county in the San Francisco Bay area, Santa Clara County includes 15 cities and serves 1.7 million residents. Led by Supervisor Liz Kniss, the county board passed an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Ordinance in 2002. It outlined the county's intent to protect the health and safety of county employees, the public, the environment, and water quality, as well as to provide sustainable solutions for pest control on county property.

To implement the IPM ordinance, the County Executive's Office retained a highly qualified professional, Naresh Duggal, to serve as a full-time IPM coordinator. County departments were required to designate a departmental IPM coordinator. Duggal, a certified entomologist with 17 years of pest management experience, has spearheaded the counties pilot projects, employee training and organization-wide adoption of IPM.

Weed management on county property includes cultural controls (irrigation system maintenance, plant care and a healthy lawn/landscape maintenance program), mechanical/physical controls (hydro mulching and seeding, use of recycled rubber mulch, wood mulch, weed fabrics) and use of reduced-risk pesticides and biopesticides. Ponds are managed with biological controls and aeration to prevent algae growth; water levels are altered to control aquatic weeds. Ground squirrels are trapped, structures vermin-proofed, and bird barriers installed in and around structures. The County manages pests with reduced-risk pesticides and biopesticides, and uses baits and abatement plans for yellow jackets and Argentine ants.

Santa Clara County set up the area's first Regional IPM Conference for participating counties and agencies. The county also created and conducted customized training programs and safety education for IPM coordinators and employees involved with pest management. Several field demonstrations on reduced-risk strategies have been conducted. The county offers IPM information on its Web site, www.sccgov.org [opens in a new window], publishes IPM manuals, a county employee IPM newsletter, and makes IPM brochures available to the public.

Santa Clara County has created a comprehensive IPM program that serves as a model for other local governments.

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THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, CHICO

The Nature Conservancy is an international, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving nature's diversity by protecting natural resources. Founded in 1951, The Nature Conservancy has safeguarded more than 117 million acres of land and 5,000 miles of rivers worldwide. The Conservancy has protected more than one million acres in California. For more than 20 years, the Conservancy has protected and restored land along the Sacramento River between Red Bluff and Colusa. It currently manages approximately 4,000 acres in agricultural production.

Using some orchards it owned and managed, the Conservancy created a walnut IPM program 12 years ago. Under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, half of the designated orchards have been intensively managed with insect growth regulators to benefit wildlife and improve water quality. The other orchards became transitional acreage where lessees gain experience with reduced-risk practices such as pheromones (scents) for pest mating disruption, cover cropping, and vegetation management without use of pre-emergent herbicides. Conservancy orchards have been used as demonstration sites for DPR's Walnut Pest Management Alliance as well as venues for a variety of research. In addition, The Nature Conservancy received a 2001 Great Valley Center grant for public outreach on IPM.

The Conservancy has also worked extensively with the California Dried Plum Board, DPR, and UC Cooperative Extension in a partnership focused on promoting reduced-risk strategies in prune production. In 1996, the Conservancy used grants from DPR and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to begin an outreach program for the prune industry. The project evolved into DPR's Prune Pest Management Alliance and ultimately became the multi-stakeholder Integrated Prune Farming Practices project. More than 20 meetings, field days, and seminars were held between 1996 and 2001 on topics such as seasonal monitoring of key pests and beneficial insects, organophosphate alternatives to control prune aphid, and

use of cover crops and hedgerows to improve water infiltration.

The Nature Conservancy's IPM program is defined by its staff's consistent outreach to walnut and prune growers, as well as management techniques that improve wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and the overall health of the Sacramento River. In the process, the Conservancy has eliminated the use of organophosphate and pyrethroid insecticides, pre-emergent herbicides, and rodenticides on most of its properties. For its vision and dynamic leadership, The Nature Conservancy richly deserves recognition as an IPM Innovator.

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VETSCH FARMS, BAKERSFIELD

Vetsch Farms of California is a family almond operation that began in 1986 with the purchase of property in Kern County. Vetsch Farms is unusual in that it produces high-quality almonds for European and domestic markets, using environmentally responsible practices.

Thomas Vetsch is committed to eliminating all high-risk pesticides from his orchards. No organophosphate pesticides are used. To reduce the need for chemicals, the farm stresses keen observation and an understanding of nature's cycles. Toward that goal, Vetsch emphasizes building soil health, enhancing beneficial habitat, using beneficial organisms and monitoring natural interactions. Seasonal monitoring for pests and beneficial insects is the cornerstone of Vetsch's IPM program. When pest populations reach established thresholds, orchards are sprayed with reduced-risk pesticides. Predatory mites are also released in areas prone to mite pests.

Vetsch Farms has strongly supported UC Cooperative Extension research and DPR's Almond Pest Management Alliance. Thomas Vetsch set aside 159 acres for demonstration of reduced-risk practices and participated in the Alliance for the past six years, providing a valuable demonstration and research project that compared pest management methods. His site gave UC researchers information on San Jose scale damage potential, a method of sampling to predict damage, and a method of managing scale with reduced-risk materials. In addition, Vetsch Farms has hosted numerous meetings so that farmers and pest control advisors can see the results of a reduced-risk approach. Thomas Vetsch has spoken about his environmentally responsible philosophy at meetings and field days, and articles about his operation have appeared in "California Grower," "Pacific Nut Producer," and "Western Grower" magazines.

As a recognized leader in Kern County IPM, Thomas Vetsch and Vetsch Farms deserve recognition as IPM Innovators. By meeting consumers at fine food shows and other venues where he promotes almond products, Thomas Vetsch says he has learned to understand consumer concerns about food and pesticides, and he has made a strong, personal commitment to promote IPM.

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Department of Pesticide Regulation

News

Media Contact:
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October 15, 2003 (03-18)
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EIGHT GROUPS WIN STATEWIDE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS

(Note to editors: Award winners are based in Napa, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, Santa Clara, Sonoma, Riverside, and Ventura counties).

SACRAMENTO -- It's happening at a Riverside museum. And in vineyards that stretch from Clear Lake to Temecula. It's working in urban landscapes in Palo Alto and Santa Rosa. And in Ventura classrooms and schoolyards.

It's IPM -- integrated pest management. Put simply, it's a way of working with nature to encourage beneficial plants and animals while making survival difficult for pests. This year, the Department of Pesticide Regulation will present its tenth annual IPM Innovator Awards to recognize California organizations for their IPM accomplishments.

DPR Director Paul Helliker will present the 2003 awards to eight recipients at 1:30 p.m. today (Wednesday, October 15) at Cal/EPA Headquarters.

"Once again, we've found environmental success stories throughout California," said Helliker. "As is often the case, many people are unaware of this outstanding work, because these environmental pioneers work so quietly and effectively to manage pest problems.

"Each one of these eight IPM Innovators has a unique story, but all have made an important contribution to protecting and preserving California's environment, and they deserve our recognition and our thanks," said Helliker.

DPR evaluations of this year's award recipients frequently cited a dedication to "sustainable" practices. Sustainability includes a commitment to protect the environment, conserve natural resources, preserve economic viability, and promote social responsibility.

The 2003 IPM Innovators are:

- The California Association of Winegrape Growers, Sacramento, and the Wine Institute, San Francisco, for collaborating on a program to encourage sustainable practices in vineyards and wineries across the state.
- James Berry Vineyards, Paso Robles, for demonstrating the viability of low-impact agriculture.
- Nord Coast Vineyard Services, Napa, for promoting non-chemical options to fight Pierce's Disease.
- The City of Palo Alto, for developing an IPM program to dramatically reduce the need for pesticides on municipal property.
- Riverside Municipal Museum, Riverside, for creating a unique pest management program tailored to museum facilities.
- The University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program, Sonoma County, for its creative approach to practical IPM tips for urban homes and gardens.
- The Ventura Unified School District, Ventura, for a cost-saving program that uses least-toxic pest management in classrooms and on school grounds.

DPR regulates the use of pesticides as one of six departments and boards within the California Environmental Protection Agency. Additional details and contact information follow for each IPM Innovator:

California Association of Winegrape Growers, Sacramento

This voluntary association represents growers who produce about 60 percent of California's wine grape tonnage. As a national wine industry leader, CAWG has developed and supported sustainable farming practices that are environmentally sound, socially responsible, and economically viable. Recent CAWG activities include an eco-labeling seminar, a sustainable agriculture conference, and a collaborative workshop on vineyards and wildlife habitat. CAWG also has played a key role in DPR's California Winegrape Pest Management Alliance, which focuses on reduced-risk pest management. In October 2002, CAWG introduced the "Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices" in cooperation with the Wine Institute. This program of best management practices includes a 490-page workbook to promote social responsibility and environmental stewardship. It provides a comprehensive guide to help growers conserve natural resources, protect the environment, and build good working relationships with neighbors. To promote these goals, CAWG and the Wine Institute have distributed more than 2,000 workbooks and held more than 60

workshops statewide in the past year. Media contact: CAWG President Karen Ross, (916) 924-5370 or Karen@cawg.org. (For more details, see the Wine Institute award description.)

Wine Institute, San Francisco

Established in 1934, the Wine Institute represents more than 650 California wineries and affiliates who produce more than 90 percent of California's wine shipments and 80 percent of all U.S. wine shipments. The Wine Institute supports sustainable agriculture through a variety of business alliances. The institute also publishes "Sustainable Winegrowing Practices -- Highlight of the Month", a semi-monthly newsletter that discusses IPM techniques. The institute's Web site http://www.wineinstitute.org highlights reports and studies that support sustainable practices. Working in cooperation with the California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG), the Wine Institute co-produced the "Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices" and an associated workbook to help members of the industry self-assess their business practices for sustainability. More than 600 vineyard representatives and almost 100 winery employees have completed these assessments to date. The Wine Institute and CAWG also have undertaken a "Performance for Sustainability" project in partnership with the California Environmental Protection Agency. This model partnership seeks to protect and enhance the environment by supporting sustainable economic development. Media contact: Director of Communications Kari Birdseye, (415) 356-7520 or kbirdseye@wineinstitute.org.

James Berry Vineyards, Paso Robles

This 71-acre farm, owned and operated by the Pebble Smith family, offers a notably successful example of low-impact agriculture. The vineyard has not been tilled in 20 years, reducing the potential for erosion. No insecticides have been used for the last 18 years. Instead, Smith maintains 15 acres of surrounding natural habitat for pest predators. Herbicide use is minimal. The vineyard is a member of the Central Coast Vineyard Team, which encourages reduced-risk pest management practices. Smith has hosted a variety of industry meetings and tours to promote non-tillage and other sustainable techniques, and his vineyard and wines have been the subject of articles in Wine Spectator, Wine Enthusiast, and the Los Angeles Times. Media contact: Pebble Smith (805) 238-7378 or pebble_smith@b-f.com.

Nord Coast Vineyard Services Inc., Napa

A family-owned vineyard management company, Nord Coast oversees 600 acres in Napa County and 300 acres in the Gilroy-Hollister area. The firm also does vineyard consulting work with an emphasis on sustainable production. Only reduced-risk pesticides are applied by Nord Coast, and Pierce's Disease is managed primarily with non-pesticide options. These include stream bank restoration projects to reduce pathogens and erosion, and encourage native plants that harbor natural pest predators. Nord Coast has received three grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for these efforts. The firm also installs nesting boxes and perches in vineyards to attract owls and other raptors that reduce rodent problems. Wildflowers and cover crops are planted to attract beneficial insects and reduce runoff. Nord Coast has played a key role in DPR's Winegrape Pest Management Alliance and undertaken notable IPM outreach and education efforts. These include programs for Spanish-speaking vineyard workers, as well as growers, pest control advisers, and the public. In addition to other public education events, Nord Coast holds an annual Vineyard Open House where neighbors and other community members learn about Nord Coast's innovative pest management techniques. Media contact: Jon Kanagy (707) 226-8774 or Ncvs@aol.com.

City of Palo Alto

Palo Alto's municipal government has used IPM techniques since the early 1990s. In 2001, the city formed a committee to adopt a citywide IPM policy. Using that policy, the city halted use of some insecticides on city property to avoid potential runoff problems. The IPM program reduced rodent chemical control use by 80 percent; launched specific IPM programs for weeds, yellowjackets, and mice; and provided extensive IPM training and assistance for city staff and the public. An annual IPM report posted online provides public information on when, where, and what pesticides are used on city property, and ranks those pesticides on toxicity. The report also assesses the progress of city departments in meeting IPM goals. To help city residents reduce pesticide use in their own homes and yards, Palo Alto's Web site www.cityofpaloalto.org/cleanbay/pest.html offers user-friendly IPM suggestions and resources. Residents can also attend city-sponsored "Bug Buster!" workshops for more help. On another front, the city provides some funding for the regional "Our Water, Our World" program. This regional pollution prevention effort focuses on preserving Bay-area surface waters and distributes IPM information online www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/cleanbay/pest3.html and through 174 commercial outlets, including hardware stores and nurseries. Media contact: Environmental Specialist Julie Weiss (650) 329-2117 or julie.weiss@cityofpaloalto.org.

Riverside Municipal Museum, Riverside

The museum is a department of the City of Riverside. In 2000, the museum staff adopted an IPM plan to deal with pest management issues unique to such a facility. In the process, the museum created a model IPM program for other museums and public agencies. Climate control is used to reduce humidity and prevent mold and mildew problems. Trapping controls rodents, and large freezer chests are used to kill insect pests without damaging museum specimens. The museum staff documents its pest monitoring and prevention efforts using computer database software. These efforts helped eliminate the use of pesticides inside the museum, and the museum is now renovating landscapes to reduce the need for pesticide use outside the building. As part of an outreach program, the museum has sponsored workshops and created exhibits on IPM and pest management themes. More than 6,700 museum visitors received information about these IPM activities in 2002-03. Media contact: Communications officer Sharon Cooley (909) 826-5997 or SCOOLEY@ci.riverside.ca.us.

U.C. Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program, Santa Rosa

The Cooperative Extension's Master Gardener Program in Sonoma County provides IPM education and outreach through its Pesticide Use Reduction Education (PURE) project. Funded by a grant from the City of Santa Rosa, this group of Master Gardeners provides a basic IPM education aimed at residential audiences. The PURE project demystifies IPM by making it more understandable and accessible to the public. For example, the project developed a system called "BUGS" to convey IPM concepts. (Be sure you know the problem. Use common sense [tolerating some level of pests]. Get physical [with traps, water sprays, natural enemies]. Substitute less-toxic products.) The project has developed notable outreach efforts, including workshops and a demonstration garden at the Sonoma County Fair. In two years, more than 50,000 people came in contact with PURE through these efforts. Media contacts: Paul Vossen (707) 565-2621 or pmvossen@ucdavis.edu, and Alexandra Devarenne (707) 565-3444 or akicenik@ucdavis.edu.

Ventura Unified School District, Ventura

Since 1999, the district has operated an IPM program that has reduced herbicide use by 90 percent. Indoor pesticides are restricted to pastes, gels, and baits. With a student population of about 17,500, and 28 sites that occupy 326 acres, the district has adopted some innovative techniques to reduce the use of pesticides, and save money on pest management. For example, teachers and district staff control ants by eliminating their trails, using plastic spray bottles filled with a soapy solution. A hot water device used on weeds controls them as effectively as a popular herbicide. Owl nesting boxes have been installed on school property to attract predators against rats, mice, and gophers. And a "zone management system" was developed to identify areas where weed control is needed, and where alternate controls can be used. In addition to educating its own employees on IPM, the district has encouraged IPM adoption through seminars and news articles. Media contact: Operations Manager Jorge Gutierrez (805) 289-7981 x1010 or jgutierrez@vtusd.k12.ca.us.

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Reduced-risk chemical use rises

THE California Department of Pesticide Regulation reports a small increase in pounds of pesticides applied in 2004, but that includes a dramatic rise in the use of some nature-friendly chemicals.

Commercial pesticide use increased from 175 million pounds in 2003 to 180 million pounds in 2004, an increase of less than 3%. More than half of the 5 million-pound increase in 2004 could be linked to two chemicals that qualify for organic agriculture: sulfur and mineral oils. In addition, "a dramatic increase occurred in the use of some newer, reduced-risk pesticides," say DPR analysts. Meanwhile, use of several classes of highly toxic chemicals declined, both in pounds applied and acres treated.

DPR Director Mary-Ann Warmerdam says the statistics are timely. "They coincide with DPR policy initiatives to emphasize more-sustainable, less-toxic pest management for agriculture and industry, and in homes and gardens," says Warmerdam. "This is just another indication that we are moving in the right direction."

IPM planning

Last year, Warmerdam directed DPR's Pest Management Advisory Committee to begin developing a statewide blueprint for Integrated Pest Management, a least-toxic approach that stresses more prevention and less reliance on chemicals. A diverse workgroup made recommendations to the committee late last year. DPR expects to move forward on its IPM blueprint after the pest management committee meets in February, says Warmerdam.

"The recommendations include more IPM research, as well as public-private cooperative efforts that offer strong and positive incentives to industry," she says.

She also welcomes a recommendation for renewed support of IPM grant programs. DPR produced dozens of successful IPM projects around the state until budget cuts stopped them in 2003.

Key Points

- Pesticide use increased less than 3% in 2004, says DPR.
- There was a dramatic rise in spraying of reduced-risk pesticides.
- The application of several highly toxic chemicals declined.

New DPR worker rules

New DPR rules will require applicators to notify growers before and after a chemical is used.

The regulations also will require growers to practice management as if an application could occur within 24 hours and to ensure notification to employees who walk within ¼ mile of a treated field.

MARY-ANN WARMERDAM

Weather pushes pest management

PESTICIDE use varies from year to year based on many factors, including types of crops, economics, acreage planted and, most notably, weather. A wet winter in 2004 promoted weed growth; then a hot, dry summer encouraged mites and other pests. In addition, acreage increased for some major crops, and high-value crops often justify more intensive pest management. Other trends from 2004 were:

- Sulfur was the most-used chemical, with 54 million pounds, or about 30% of all pounds applied. Favored by both conventional and organic farmers, sulfur saw use increase by nearly 800,000 pounds (1.6%) in 2004. Use of mineral oil, another chemical that qualifies for organic production, increased by 2.8 million pounds (44%).
- A dramatic increase occurred in the use of some newer, reduced-risk pesticides such as spinosad, acetamiprid, pyraclostrobin, methoxyfenozide, carfentrazone-ethyl and boscalid, report analysts from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation. Spinosad is a relatively new chemical class of insecticides derived from a natural soil bacterium. A vacationing scientist first discovered it in an abandoned rum distillery in the Caribbean. Spinosad use increased by 4,400 pounds and 52,000 acres to a total of more than 858,000 cumulative acres in 2004.
- Use of the insecticide organophosphate and carbamate chemicals, compounds of high regulatory concern, continued to decline. Use fell by 130,000 pounds (1.6%) and by 360,000 acres (5.7%) in 2004 compared with the previous year.
- Use of chemicals classified as reproductive toxins declined by 600,000 pounds (2.5%) and by 180,000 acres (7.7%). The fumigant methyl bromide showed the largest decline in pounds with 295,000, or 4%.
- As in previous years, the most pesticide use occurred in the San Joaquin Valley, the nation's No. 1 agricultural area. Fresno, Kern, Tulare and San Joaquin counties had the highest poundage use.

Enforcement up: Pesticide fines doubled in 2005

AN informal survey of pesticide enforcement actions by county agricultural commissioners showed proposed fines nearly doubled from 2004 to 2005, the Department of Pesticide Regulation reports.

DPR polled a dozen key counties — most in the Central Valley — that account for more than three-quarters of the pesticide pounds applied annually. The survey found almost $180,000 in pesticide fines proposed during calendar-year 2005, compared with about $90,000 the previous year.

In Fresno County, proposed fines went from about $12,000 in 2004 to more than $39,000 in 2005. Stanislaus County reported 10 cases and almost $30,000 in 2005, vs. two cases and $1,400 in 2004.

"The statistics underscore efforts by DPR and county agricultural commissioners to provide uniform statewide enforcement to protect the public," says DPR Director Mary-Ann Warmerdam. "We also want to protect the majority of law-abiding growers from unfair business competition by a relatively few, chronic offenders. Our complementary goals are consistent with the governor's vision for environmental and economic progress."

Fresno County Agricultural Commissioner Jerry Prieto Jr., who serves as president of the commissioners' association, says his enforcement program has consistently applied pesticide law.

"I had more cases that warranted action in '05, and the fine guidelines have increased. These two reasons are responsible for the increase in fine dollars in Fresno County," says Prieto.

News Net Briefs

More antioxidants in organics

The Organic Center's second State of Science Review concludes that organic farming methods have the potential to elevate average antioxidant levels, especially in fresh produce. The report reveals that on average, the organic crops contained about one-third higher antioxidant and/or phenolic content than comparable conventional produce grown under the same conditions.

Beef demand rises in 2004

A meat industry group says demand for beef rose 8% in 2004, crediting a checkoff program that raises funds for marketing programs, according to *Supermarket News*.

Brazil expects growth in sugar demand

Brazil's Ministry of Agriculture is planning to increase sugarcane cultivation by 2.5 million hectares to meet the demand for sugar and alcohol production, according to Industrial Information Resources Inc., Houston, Texas. The report projects a 400% global increase in ethanol demand by 2010. Demand expected due to "flex" cars capable of burning both gasoline and alcohol will create continuing pressure on fuel consumption sources and price, which will be exacerbated by the reduction in world sugar supplies.

BSE testing concerns

The voluntary nature of the U.S. bovine spongiform encephalopathy testing program leaves loopholes in the system and prevents officials from collecting adequate information, says the U.S. Department of Agriculture's inspector general, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. USDA officials, however, contend they have stepped up rule enforcement.

Mad cow culprit sustains stem cells

Scientists at the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research have found the protein that causes bovine spongiform encephalopathy is important for maintaining certain adult stem cells. Whitehead's Susan Lindquist and Harvey Lodish co-authored an online paper in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Researchers have known that a protein called PrP causes BSE and its human equivalent, Creutzfeld-Jakob disease. "Clearly, PrP is important for maintaining stem cells," says Lodish. "We're not sure yet how it does this, but the correlation is obvious." Adds Lindquist, "This is the first indication of a beneficial role for it [PrP] in a living animal."

Fins identify salmon origins

West Coast researchers from 10 salmon genetic labs can pinpoint with 95% accuracy the origin of any Chinook salmon found dead or alive in West Coast waterways. Scientists selected just 15 genetic markers that accurately characterize an individual Chinook salmon's birthplace down to the marine equivalent of an expanded zip code. Previously, scientists had depended on information from coded-wire nosetags attached to hatchery-grown (not wild) fish, and they had to kill the fish to read the tags. The new method is standardized across all laboratories and is nonlethal. Each fish gives a small clipping of one fin.

Lamb exports up 31%

The U.S. Meat Export Federation reports the latest USDA statistics show U.S. lamb exports soared 31% in volume (8,310 metric tons) and 45% in value ($15.44 million) in the first 11 months.

California FARMER

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Almond Stewardship Plan Begins

Compiled by staff

The Almond Board of California's (ABC) Environmental Committee has begun a program to increase awareness and understanding of environmental issues affecting California's billion dollar almond industry. California provides 80% of the world's almond supply.

The core of the program is a Web site database that will collect all environmentally related research, regulations and media information pertaining to the almond industry. The Web site database, www.enviroag.org, is compiled from industry funded scientific research projects on air and water quality and pesticide use, as well as research conducted by other educational institutions and federal and state agencies.

A Headline News section offers postings from various news sources on almond environmental issues, while the calendar section provides times and dates of upcoming environmental meetings. The ABC is also launching a new grower newsletter that will inform growers about research results and successful innovative farming practices.

"The almond industry has spent more than $12 million dollars since the ABC began funding research projects thirty years ago. This research consists of over 200 projects that examine innovative almond farming methods. The goal of much of this research is to find ways to look at environmentally friendly approaches to almond growing," explained Chris Heintz, director of production research at the ABC.

The almond industry has been recognized for its efforts. The Environmental Protection Agency's Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP) selected the Almond Board of California and the almond industry as a 2003 PESP Champion. The ABC was showcased for the research efforts it has championed over the past several years that led to an industry-wide reduction of pesticide use in almonds and more emphasis on alternative bio-sensitive integrated pest management practices. The California Department of Pesticide Regulation also recognized the almond industry's efforts in environmental stewardship by awarding the ABC its prestigious Integrated Pest Management Innovator Award.

"Almond growers have to think long term because an orchard produces for 20 or more years," says Dave Baker, Chairman of the Environmental Committee and a grower in Stanislaus County. "As stewards of the land, it behooves us to make sure that we keep the soil, air and water in the best possible condition so that the next generation can reap the benefits of a healthy environment. It's a legacy that California almond growers are proud to pass on."

California FARMER

Issue Date: August 2004, Posted On: 8/27/2004

Tillage Event to Focus on Environment

Compiled by staff

The focus of the UC's annual Conservation Tillage Conference, Sept. 8 and 9 at the UC Westside Research and Extension Center near Five Points, integrates the farmers' bottom line with preservation of California's natural resources.

For years, UC scientists have touted the potential economic benefits to farmers for reducing the number of times a tractor drags through an agricultural field. Reduced tillage promises to save money by conserving water, cutting down on tractor fuel and wear and tear expenses, and reducing pesticide and fertilizer requirements. This year, however, the conference links economics with what conservation tillage can do for air, water and soil quality.

The conference draws speakers and materials from across the Western states, rather than just California, and is lengthened to two days, allowing for more comprehensive presentations, equipment demonstrations and field tours.

"We have a cluster of conservation tillage workgroup members who are farmers in close proximity to the Five Points area," says Jeff Mitchell, UCCE vegetable crops specialist and CT workgroup chair. "They are superb in the advances they are making in reduced tillage production. They'll be our featured speakers and hosts for the farm tours."

The event starts with a broad view of successful conservation tillage applications presented by scientists from Oregon State University, the University of Arizona and University of California, a farmer from Washington State and a USDA researcher with experience in the Southeast United States and Brazil. During the afternoon, a range of concurrent sessions and equipment demonstrations are held.

On Thursday participants may select tours to the local farms of Bob Prys, Andy Rollin, Tom Barcellos, Scott Schmidt and John Diener. The conference is from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day.

Mitchell encourages participants to carefully review the program to decide which sessions they wish to attend. The program is online at http://groups.ucanr.org/ucct.

Registration is $10 per person. To register, send a check payable to "UC Regents" to Diana Nix, UC Kearney Research and Extension Center, 9240 S. Riverbend Ave., Parlier, CA 93648.

The conference is at the UC Westside Research and Extension Center, 17353 W. Oakland Ave., at the corner of Lassen and Oakland avenues about five miles south of Five Points. Overnight accommodations are available in nearby Coalinga at Harris Ranch Inn, (559) 935-0717, Motel 6, (559) 935-1536, and Best Western Big Country Inn, (559) 935-0866. For more information, contact Jeff Mitchell at (559) 646-6565, mitchell@uckac.edu.

California FARMER

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Biotech Crops Reduce Pesticide Use, Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Compiled by staff

After just nine years of commercialization, biotech crops have made a significant, positive impact on the global economy and environment, decreasing pesticide spraying and reducing the environmental footprint associated with pesticide use by 14%, according to a study released Tuesday.

"Since 1996, adoption of biotech crops has contributed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and decreased pesticide spraying," says Graham Brookes, director of PG Economics, and one of the authors who conducted the study. "While greatly enhancing the way farmers in 18 countries produce food, feed and fiber, biotech crops have reduced the environmental footprint associated with agricultural practices. This study offers the first quantifiable global look at the impact of biotech crop production."

The study, "GM crops: the global socio-economic and environmental impact -- the first nine years 1996–2004," reported that biotech crops contributed to significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural practices. This reduction results from decreased fuel use, about 475 million gallons in the past nine years, and additional soil carbon sequestration because of reduced plowing or improved conservation tillage associated with biotech crops. In 2004, this reduction was equivalent to eliminating more than 22 billion pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, or removing 5 million cars – one-fifth of cars registered in the United Kingdom -- from the road for one year.

Biotech crops have reduced the volume of pesticide spraying globally by 6% since 1996, equivalent to a decrease of 380 million pounds according to the study. That's equivalent to eliminating 1,514 rail cars of pesticide's active ingredient. The largest environmental gains from changes in pesticide spraying have been from biotech soybeans and cotton, which have reduced the associated environmental footprint by 19% and 17%, respectively.

According to the study, the industrialized nations of the United States and Canada, as well as the developing nations of China, South Africa and Argentina, experienced the greatest reductions in the environmental impact of crop production.

"As the world is increasingly focused on the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is clear biotech crops are already making an important positive contribution to achieving this goal," Brookes says.

In addition to environmental gains from biotech crops, substantial net economic benefits at the farm level have been realized. Since 1996, global farm income has increased by a cumulative total of $27 billion, derived from a combination of enhanced productivity and efficiency gains. This increase in farm income is equivalent to adding 3% to 4% to the value of global production of the four main biotech crops. Herbicide-tolerant soybeans have generated the greatest gains at more than $17 billion in increased income, while biotech cotton farmers improved their income by $6.5 billion in the past nine years.

Growers in the United States and Argentina have reaped the greatest rewards, each gaining approximately $10 billion in the past nine years, while farmers in China have experienced a $4 billion income increase from planting biotech cotton.

In addition to the significant measurable benefits, valuable indirect benefits that are more difficult to quantify can be credited to biotech crop adoption. These include increased management flexibility, facilitating reduced tillage practices, reduced production risk and improved crop quality.

More than 8.25 million farmers in 18 countries around the world have adopted biotech crops, and 90% of those are resource-poor producers located in developing countries.

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Capital Press
AGRICULTURE WEEKLY

Friday, January 13, 2006

Less is more for Bakersfield grower

California Department of Pesticide Regulation honors Almond grower Thomas Vetsch with an IPM Award

Julia Hollister
Freelance Writer

Friday, January 13, 2006

A Kern County almond grower's mission of environmental stewardship paid off when he was honored by the state of California for his innovative integrated pest management techniques.

"Thomas Vetsch is an example of an increasing number of almond growers who are striving to improve reduced risk farming practices while maintaining a productive and healthy environment for future generations," said Chris Heintz, director of production research and environment for the Almond Board of California.

His accomplishments caught the attention of the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, which honored him with an IPM Innovator Award. Vetsch was praised for using predatory mites, spraying low-risk pesticides and seasonal monitoring for pests and beneficial insects.

More than seven years ago, he was at a crossroads in his growing operation and decided to convert 160 acres of his traditionally farmed almond orchard to practices that reduce reliance on insecticides and routine fungicides.

The Almond Board stepped in with financial support and University of California Cooperative Extension provided the scientific knowledge.

The result was so successful that he converted all four ranches at Vetsch Farms of California to sustainable, IPM-based operations. Mario Viveros farm advisor helped him convert a section of his almond orchard into a demonstration block where IPM strategies were developed and compared with conventional almond production strategies.

The Almond Board has become a model for the public-private partnership in IPM research and education, allowing growers to adopted reduced risk farming practices.

The farm replaced traditional organophosphate format sprays with good orchard sanitation and a well-timed oil spray. Fertilizers are applied according to the needs of individual blocks and varieties. Converting to microsprinklers and increasing light and air movement through the orchard by hedging and thinning trees reduced fungicide applications.

When the IPM program got its "legs" Vetsch reduced acreage so that he could focus more resources on monitoring, scouting and cultural practices. Today the farms spend about $40 an acre on checking and investigating, less than the cost of a single insecticide spray.

That information gathering has become the cornerstone of all its production practices.

"We stay connected to the trees in the orchard and are able to detect problems right away," said farm general manager Ken Ballou. "We focus more time, energy and resources into less acreage to maximize the output. As a

result our production has gradually been going up the last five years."

As a result of this management, yields at Vetsch Farms have jumped from an average of 1,800 pounds per acre to about 2,400 pounds per acre and returns are further improved through less costly inputs. Production costs per acre have decreased by about 24 percent as yields increased about 20 percent.

The farms continue to focus on improving irrigation management and building soil health to bring about a sustainable environment for his orchard. He believes these practices will pay off, not just for the future but also for the long-term productivity of his trees.

"We really found out that less is more," Vetsch said.

Related Links

California FARMER

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EPA Sees Agriculture as 'Producer of Solutions' for the Environment

Jacqui Fatka
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Instead of agricultural players being the last to know about new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rules, the national agency hopes to bring agricultural stakeholders in earlier to better address environmental needs. That's the sentiment expressed in an interview today (Monday) with Jon Scholl, counselor to the administrator for agricultural policy at EPA.

In the past, many EPA-passed rules or laws didn't have producer-level agriculture in mind, explains Scholl. After several years go by, the impact on agriculture is realized and EPA is "behind the eight ball," Scholl notes.

The new policy initiative announced by EPA outlines ways for engaging the agricultural community through collaboration and cooperation to solve problems earlier in the rulemaking process. Issues high on the list include livestock wastes, particularly with air quality; water quality; and renewable fuel.

Scholl says EPA recognizes the best way to avoid trouble is by talking to farmers who see problems on a day-to-day basis. "Farmers do bring a lot of common sense to problem solving," he says, adding that EPA wants to tap into that knowledge base and make better rules and regulations that fit agriculture's role of taking care of the environment.

For example, instead of taking a more traditional approach, the EPA is collaboratively addressing emissions standards at ethanol plants. Scholl says EPA currently works with the ethanol industry and tries to make sure a fair and effective policy is established while ensuring EPA isn't inhibiting growth in the industry and still protecting the environment.

Scholl advises producers to discuss potential problems with local and state environmental leaders at all stages of the process, but most importantly at the beginning. "And part of my job here at headquarters will be to make sure we're thinking of agriculture and our impact right from the beginning," he concludes.

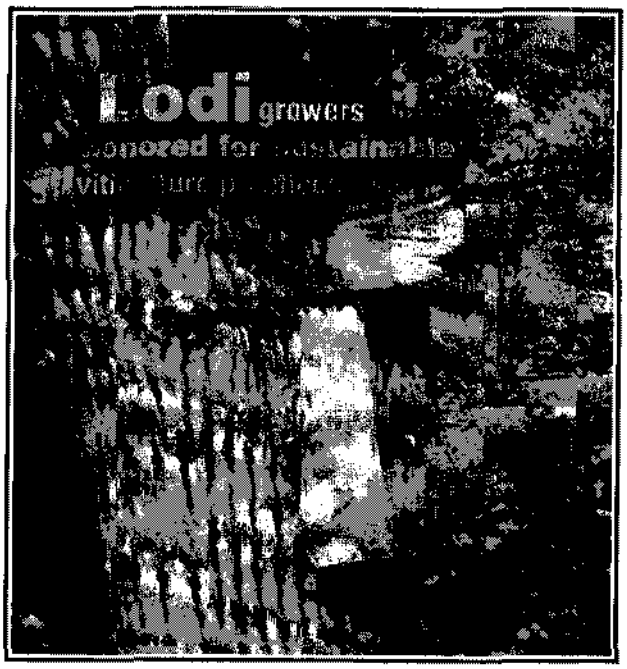
More information on the National Strategy for Agriculture.

CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

Lodi growers honored for sustainable viticulture practices

Issue Date: February 8, 2006

By Ching Lee
Assistant Editor



Several Lodi winegrape growers are hoping a new program promoting their sustainable viticulture practices will help distinguish their grapes and move more wine.

Six Lodi vineyards certified under the Lodi Rules for Sustainable Winegrowing program were honored in January by the Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission, which developed the program that is now the state's first set of appellation-wide sustainable viticulture standards.

"We've got a long history of doing sustainable practices here (in this region), and this program is so we can actually make some more money doing it as well," said Cliff Ohmart, research and integrated pest management director for the commission.

Unlike "do no harm" certification programs that tell farmers what to avoid, the Lodi Rules program "requires growers to use a wide range of sustainable practices that result in continual improvement of all aspects of their farming operations," Ohmart added.

The program is open to all Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission growers on a voluntary basis. Participating growers can have their vineyards certified as producing sustainably grown winegrapes, and wineries making wine from these grapes can use the certification in their marketing programs.

John Ledbetter and his daughter, Kim Ledbetter-Bronson, have enrolled 959 acres of winegrapes on four separate vineyards in the program. They consider Lodi Rules as a natural extension of what they have been doing since the early 1990s and would like to continue the program as a long-term part of the business model at Vino Farms.

"What made Vino Farms want to participate in the program is that the philosophy behind Lodi Rules is something that we truly believe in and have been doing for years," said Ledbetter-Bronson. "It was a way for us to continue to have Lodi in the forefront, ahead of other appellations in the wine business, and to be recognized as that."

As global competition continues to squeeze the state's wine sector, California growers are looking for ways to differentiate and add value to their winegrapes and wine.

For Jerry Fry and his son, Bruce, participating in the Lodi Rules program was a way to gain validation and to create an incentive for wineries to buy their product.

"It's very competitive, so this is for us in Lodi to get credibility for what we're doing and to show that we're growing quality winegrapes," said Jerry Fry. "In today's world, no matter what you say, talk is cheap. We did the program to show that we walk the talk."

That no other appellation in the state--not even Sonoma or Napa--has this type of certification program makes Lodi Rules that much more valuable to growers who want their grapes to stand out from the rest, he added.

"Lodi has got to be the leader, not just in California or the United States but in the world--being IPM innovators, being environmentally sound," said Bruce Fry. "That's the goal."

To be certified, growers must comply with sustainable winegrowing standards as specified by the Lodi Rules and show that their pesticide usage has a limited impact on the environment. Each component is scored on a point system.

The standards have been peer reviewed by scientists, academics and environmentalists, said Ohmart. Protected Harvest, a nonprofit organization that independently certifies farmers' use of environmental growing standards, also endorses the program. Growers must pass a third-party audit of viticulture practices to achieve the annual certification.

The program is based on the Lodi Winegrower's Workbook, which the Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission published in 2000 to help growers improve specific sustainable farming practices.

Those who have been using the workbook are already practicing the standards of Lodi Rules, said Robert Pirie of Colligere Farm Management, who certified 220 vineyard acres, including the J and D Ranch northwest of Lodi and 160 acres at the Clay Station Ranch northeast of Lodi.

"It's nothing that we haven't been doing already, and a lot of growers in this area are doing it," he said. "It's just getting certified for it--just doing the paperwork and making sure it gets checked."

Having been a farmer for 27 years, Pirie said going through the certification process has "made me re-examine the things I was taking for granted and ultimately made me a better grower."

"We make our living off the land and off the environment, so we have to take care of it," Pirie said. "I think a lot of people don't perceive that. They think farmers don't care and just want to spray. We need to change the average consumer's idea of what farmers are like."

Joe Dexter, who has certified 7 acres of two vineyards, said he was interested in the program when he learned he could reduce his farming costs in certain areas. But he is most excited about what the program has done for his product.

"This method of farming will produce better quality grapes," he said. "The grapes have more flavor, more color. My 2005 crop has a rather outstanding yield, and the flavor of the wine is really good."

Other growers who have completed their certification under the Lodi Rules program include Keith Watts of K and S Watts Vineyards and Robert Abercrombie of Sutter Home Family Vineyards.

*(Ching Lee is a reporter for Ag Alert. She may be contacted at **clee@cfbf.com**.)*

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CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

America's farmers and ranchers protect the environment

Issue Date: May 19, 2004

By Cyndie Sirekis
American Farm Bureau Federation

From time to time, all Americans should take some time to reflect on the contribution that farmers and ranchers make to protect the environment.

As stewards of the land, one way that American farmers and ranchers protect the environment is by using modern conservation and tillage practices that keep residue such as leaves and stalks in the field. Conservation tillage continues to grow in popularity and is currently used on more than 100 million acres, with reduced tillage used on more than 60 million acres.

Nearly 60 percent of U.S. crops are grown using these types of conservation tillage techniques, greatly reducing field runoff and keeping crop protectants where they belong-in the field and out of streams. This helps protect water quality.

Record numbers of farmers continue to participate in programs that protect the environment and provide habitat for wildlife. As of February, more than 34 million acres of U.S. farmland were enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program.

With the widespread adoption of modern farming techniques-such as global positioning satellites, biotechnology and conservation tillage-farmers and ranchers are producing more food than ever before on fewer acres with fewer inputs. This has resulted in a great reduction in the loss of soil through erosion, while increasing protection for our nation's waterways.

A generation ago, soil erosion rates of up to 40 tons an acre were recorded during the Dust Bowl. In 1982, an average of about four tons of soil per acre were lost to erosion. Today, less than three tons of soil per acre are lost to erosion on average. Soil erosion on 23.5 million acres of highly erodible land enrolled in the CRP has decreased by 90 percent-to less than one ton per acre per year.

During the past 12 years, just over 1 million acres of wetlands have been restored across the United States through the Wetlands Reserve Program. Farmers participating in the Conservation Reserve Program have improved the quality of land by installing almost 2 million acres of filter strips, riparian buffers, grass waterways, shelter belts, field windbreaks, living snow fences, salt-tolerant vegetation and shallow water areas for wildlife.

By early 2004, farmers, ranchers and other landowners had installed 1.54 million miles of conservation buffers under a U.S. Department of Agriculture initiative. Conservation buffers can improve soil, air and water quality while enhancing wildlife habitat. They also play a role in restoring biodiversity and creating more scenic landscapes across farmland vistas.

In addition to all of these efforts, hundreds of thousands of trees are planted on farmland each year. And as ever-rising energy costs become a daily fact of life, American-grown renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel made from corn, soybeans and other crops that are beneficial to the environment become even more attractive.

Every so often, we should all take a moment to recognize America's farmers and ranchers for the dedication and hard work that they put into protecting the environment, while producing the world's safest, most abundant and most affordable food supply.

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